

The Power of Psychotropic Medicines

Differences Between Psychiatrists and Psychologists

- Psychiatrists are medical doctors with up to 12 years of medical training in biology, anatomy, chemistry and the other sciences, plus clinical training to diagnose disease and prescribe medication to treat illnesses.
- Psychiatrists have extensive, specialized post-graduate training in the treatment of mental illness and substance use disorders.
- Clinical psychologists are not medically trained and no legislative action can qualify them to prescribe medications to persons with mental illness.
- Psychologists always had a clear path to prescribing privileges: medical school.
- Psychologists, like social workers, mental health counselors, and marriage and family therapists, should be proud of their training in human behavior, but they do not have the basic medical education and supervised post-graduate training necessary to prescribe medication safely and effectively.

Training

- A crash course in prescribing cannot substitute for the comprehensive knowledge and skills physicians achieve through medical education and rigorous clinical experience.
- Allowing non-medically trained professionals to prescribe medications would lead to mediocrity in the American mental health system.
- Non-physician professionals who do prescribe (e.g., nurse practitioners, physician's assistants, podiatrists and dentists) have medical training.
- The issue of psychologists|| prescribing is strongly opposed by influential elements within the profession of psychology.

Medications

- The psychotropic medications are among the most powerful available to modern medicine. They don't just affect the brain, they affect the entire body.
- A medical degree is required to properly diagnose psychiatric illness and prescribe medications safely and effectively.
- Psychotropic medications are highly effective in treating serious mental illness, but if not appropriately prescribed and monitored they can result in drug addiction, more severe illness, or even death.
- Knowing when not to prescribe is as important as knowing when to prescribe.

Patient Safety Is At Risk

- Mental illnesses are real, diagnosable and treatable illnesses.
- Often times, patients with mental illness also have other serious medical complications. Without a medical background, psychologists could miss patients potentially fatal medical conditions. Psychiatrists have the diagnostic knowledge and medical training to treat patient as a whole, not just from the neck up.

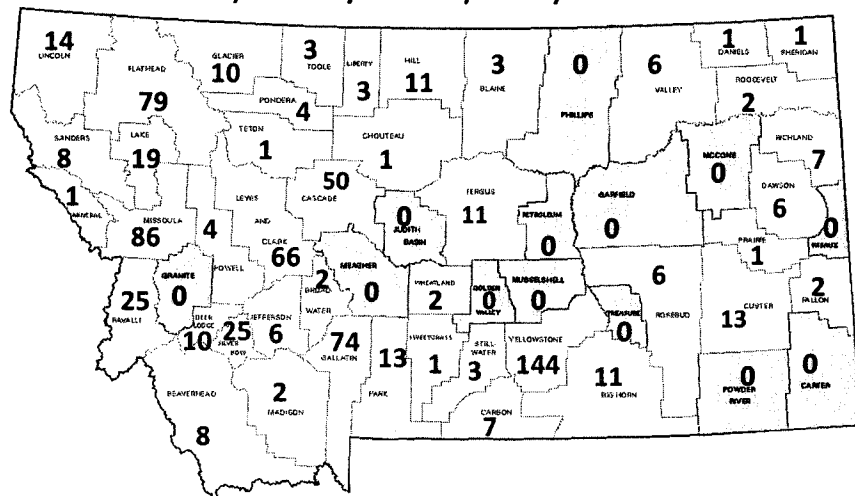
- Psychologists are asking for the right to practice medicine without going to medical school. That's dangerous for patient safety.
- Patients with mental illnesses have the right to be treated by the best-qualified professional a medically-trained physician.
- Lowering costs should never lower the quality of care.
- Giving psychologists the prescription pad is bad medicine; a risk we can't afford.

Access to Care

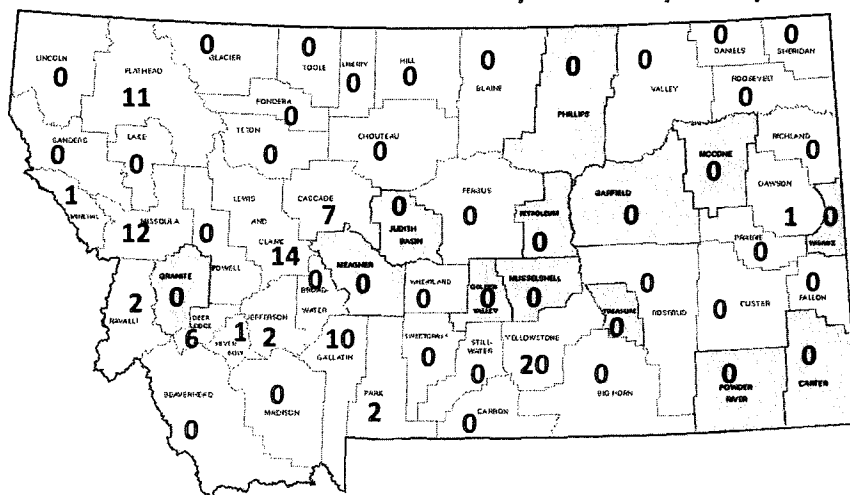
- There is no shortage of prescribing professionals. Psychologists are not geographically situated to serve rural populations better than psychiatrists.
- Americans have the best medical care available in the world today. We should strive to make this care available to everyone, and not force patients, especially poor, elderly and those in rural areas, to settle for second best.
- High-quality and cost-effective treatment with mental illnesses is best provided by collaboration between psychologists and physicians.
- The needs of under-served areas can best be met by improving the mental health training of general physicians and other medically-trained practitioners who are more widely distributed than psychologists.
- Other solutions include: collaboration with primary care physicians, circuit riding by psychiatrists, and telepsychiatry services.

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Number of Primary Care Physicians by county in 2009



Number of Psychiatrists by county in 2009



Number of Psychologists by county in 2009

